



The Meteor.

Edited by Members of Rugby School.

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It is scarce a week ago since the 7th of February came and went—the birthday of the *Meteor*. Few but the *Meteor* himself remembered the auspicious anniversary. Yes! it is but a year ago since he was thrust, rather clumsily, before the Rugbeian eye. No astronomers announced his appearance. He had, as it were, hidden himself from their critical glance, and was determined that no one should make any remarks about him or his personal appearance, until they should behold him soliciting them to invest sixpence in his behalf. He had nothing to recommend him, but that he was a novelty. All Rugbeians will congratulate him on reaching his first birthday, and hope that he may live long, and be spared the melancholy fate which befell and cut short the career of his predecessor, the *New Rugby Magazine*. Up to this time he does not deny that he has been brilliant; but he feels sad at the thought that his nurses are not exactly those who watched over him at his birth, and hushed his infant sighs. On our part, we will try to fill their places as we best can, and to make him feel as little as possible the painful loss which he has continually been compelled to sustain.

We hear that the Captain of the Eleven has received a challenge from Rossall School. We have also reason to believe that Cheltenham has been endeavouring to arrange a match with us. Such a tribute of homage paid to our fame is inexpressibly gratifying. We can almost foresee the day when the picture so graphically described by Longfellow, at the commencement of *Hiawatha*,

shall be symbolically realised, when the various cricketing nations of England shall assemble at the feet of the R.S.C.C.—the Great Manitou of Cricket; shall wash of their war-paint in the clear-flowing Avon; and shall smoke the pipe or bowl the ball of peace in harmonious concert. For the present we can only hope that the virgin Goddess of Rugby Cricket will not be intoxicated by the sweet fumes of adulatory incense which are circling round her. Might we not on this occasion be tempted to exclaim, in the language of the fortunate beauty in the *Beggar's Opera*?

“How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away.”

Is it not a poet who observes “Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast”? We hope that those visitors at our Concert who laboured under the delusion that our ordinary Big-Sides are at least as sanguinary as Sadowa, were gratified to observe that the poet's words did not prove false in this case, that the storm of unearthly passions was laid to sleep, and the quenchless thirst for blood assuaged by strains as harmonious as those whereby Timotheus of old “raised a mortal to the skies.” Seriously, if those who entertain deep-rooted prejudices against our game, would take the trouble to visit our winter concert (two days after the greatest football match of the season), and inspect the quiet, orderly rows which darken the background of Big School, they would (we suspect) find some difficulty in reconciling their experience with the fanciful account (which ingenious

Zoologists persist in adding to the "Natural History of Animals") entitled "The Rugby Football Player in his savage state."

It seems a truth in history, and is therefore a maxim in politics, that it is in times of peace that a nation is wont to effect reforms in its constitution. The present Term is what may be called our annual peace. We have no House Matches, which are the life of Football; no Foreign Matches, which are the life of Cricket. What little excitement we have is desultory and intermittent; do what we will we remain "unattached." It follows, then, that the present is the Term in which whatever changes are necessary, whatever reforms advisable, must be made. When the "Anomalies" was yesterday, when the "Free Foresters" is next Saturday, and the Marlborough match less than a month off, when our chief interest is behind Diver's net, or concentrated on New Bigside, it is hardly to be expected that we can give our heads to reforming the constitution of Bigside Levée, or the rules of the Fives Courts. When the all-important Cock-House is going gradually on, when we are quarrelling over the last "no-take-up" of some oblique-eyed umpire, when this friend is expecting his cap, and that friend cherishing a hope of the School Twenty, it is ridiculous to expect that we can preserve that calmness and coolness of deliberation which is indispensable to those who approach the task of weighing the justice of the new boys' hat, or the desirability of increasing the School Prizes at the Athletics by a few shillings. No, it is amid the repose and the comparative leisure of the present Term that our Legislators must do their work.

It is for this reason that we take up a subject which we have already started, and in which we earnestly believe reform to be needed. And at this point it may not be out of place to make a remark which we owe to ourselves. Anyone who has tried it will know that it is a very serious and difficult thing to carry out any reform in the School. Here the *laissez-faire* principle, which always is in the teeth of the advocates of change, has a most powerful stronghold. Here, in questions of custom, possession seems to us to have by far a greater proportion than *nine* points of law.

Humble as we are, conscious of imperfection, &c., &c., we do take to ourselves some credit as helpers in carrying out necessary

reform, as those who strengthen the hands of those who seek to improve the School. In raising questions, in giving scope for free discussion—operations formerly very difficult of accomplishment,—the *Meteor* prides itself on making easier the path to removal of abuses.

To state plainly the point we wish now to discuss, it is *the taking of Fives-courts*. There exists, as has been explained in these columns, a practice by which a certain house has by far the greatest facilities in taking them, has, in fact, the power, for a great many hours, of monopolising them.

Now, in the first-place, the fives-courts belong to the School. They were built at the expense of the School; therefore, by a rule that is generally followed in England, and, we believe, a few other civilised countries,—viz., that what a man fairly pays for is his property,—they are the property of the School. Moreover, the contributions of every member of the School to the building of the fives-courts, and to their support, were and are equal; therefore again, by another simple rule, all members of the School have an equal right to use them.

The question, then, that requires to be looked into is the method of taking the courts. It was obviously necessary, at their construction, to frame some code of rules as to the method of playing on the courts: out of all competitors to decide whose right to the court was the strongest. For the hours after calling-over on half-holidays—sometimes the best hours of the week—the rule which held good in other matters (such as taking ground for cricket and football) was followed,—that the court belonged to the highest fellow who chose to take it. This claim of height in the School, from its existing so generally in the School, may be assumed to have been and to be the best. But this rule was not extended to the hours after dinner on whole school-days, often, as any one's experience will testify, the most convenient time for hand-fives. These hours were left to shift for themselves, and the usage grew up of the courts belonging to the fellows who first reached them, starting from their own houses when the dinner-bell rang.

On this usage, which is now in practice among us, we wish to ask a few questions:

(1.) Has an Arnoldite a stronger right to one single hour of hand-fives—much less to nine of the best hours—than a Moberlyite, when the payments of both have been precisely equal?

(2.) Is it just that it should be in the power of a single house (a power not unfrequently exercised) to monopolise completely for many hours the Courts which belong to the whole School?

(3.) Is the system of the right of nearness of boarding-house the only possible one? and if not, the best one?

(4.) Would it not be fairer that the claim of the fastest runner—as fair a one as can be found after that of height in the School, and one which prevails among the members of the monopolising house,—should be extended to the whole School? *i.e.*, that all claimants should start from one spot.

If these questions cannot be answered, surely it is high time to clear the School of such an injustice as now marks the administration of the fives-courts.

If they cannot be answered, is it not the duty of some legislator to take the matter before Big-side Levée, and secure to the School what is their undoubted right,—that the possession of the fives-courts should be at all hours regulated by as fair a rule as that which regulates their possession on half-holidays?

OUR Football Season is over. If there were any who predicted that football reform could not prove beneficial, and might prove harmful, they must long since have seen that their fears were unfounded. But football is not the only branch in Rugby which needs reform. Within the last ten days has an alteration in the arrangement of the Racquet Court been proposed and carried out, but one blot still tarnishes the shield of Rugby. Whether because the sympathies of those most concerned have not been sufficiently engaged, or whether the School at large has been lacking in spirit, we do not presume to say, but certainly the exhortations with which we have continually goaded the Rifle Corps have not worked the improvements we could wish. In looking at the condition and management of the Rifle Corps, the question naturally divides itself into two parts. We have, first, the drilling, secondly the shooting. In these two departments it is needless for us to observe that excellence is equally necessary. No army of Volunteers or others could be of any service in the field unless proficient in both respects. But as regards ourselves the School has always shown a far greater deficiency in the former than the latter. We can hold our own in shooting

contests with any of the neighbouring Corps, but in drilling the Corps never progresses beyond the most elementary movements. It seems to us that there is need of some field-day or general inspection which might do for the drilling what the Public School Contest at Wimbledon does for the shooting. This advantage would, with many others, be best secured by enrolment. In that case the School corps would have to attend Battalion drills, a fact which of itself necessitates a far greater proficiency than at present. The competition also which would be excited by drilling with other corps would tend to cause improvement in this respect. But let us now for a moment consider the impediments which stand in the way of this being carried out, and see if we cannot propose a plan by which they may be removed. The first and most serious objection is that of age, it being necessary for every enrolled member to be over 17 years of age, which leaves, on the average, but a year and a half before the time of their leaving the School. Now the number in an enrolled corps must be 60 at the least, and we doubt much whether this number could be permanently secured from the 120 or so of the above age in the School. Secondly, the standard of drilling would have to be considerably higher to enable us to join with credit in the Battalion Drills; and thirdly, the posts of Officers could not be held by members of the School, as commissions could only be granted to permanent officers; we should, therefore, have to turn to outsiders to take these posts, which would obviously be an awkward position for both parties. We would suggest that a number of Masters and Old Rugbeians in the town might club together and form a corps, the strength of which might be augmented by the addition of those members of the School Corps who were anxious to be enrolled. The objections we have stated would by this plan be at once removed. From these two sources the required number could easily be kept up, though it would be impossible to do so from one body alone. Secondly, the difficulty of keeping up to a higher standard of efficiency, as regards drill, would be considerably lessened by the younger members having to drill in a body with permanent and experienced hands. Moreover, as regards the commanding, one officer might be chosen from each body composing the Corps, one from the Masters, one from the Old Rugbeians, and one from the School, for it would only be necessary to have two commissioned officers,

and thus the third might be a member of the School. We shall, doubtless, be attacked on all sides for daring to suggest such a complete and novel re-organization, but we shall not grumble at the rejection and derision of our plan, if we do but stir the latent energies of more able Reformers than ourselves, to take up their pens and propose one more practicable.

THE SCHOOL CONCERT.

If there is one improvement recommended by the Commissioners for trial at Rugby which can be said to have been a more decided success than another, it is the reorganization of its musical system. The singing in Chapel and at the Concerts, up to October, 1864, was barely tolerable. The choir had (we believe about 40 voices) met for practice one hour a week, and depended on the paid choristers for all the real work. The main attraction at the Concert was *Vive la Compagnie*. The arrival of Mr. Goldschmidt and Mr. Edwards changed the whole face of things. The numbers quickly ran up from 40 to over 100; any piece of music that was taken in hand was carefully learnt, before being sung publicly; and since that time the improvement has been so marked and rapid, that every successive concert has shown itself, in some point or other, better than the one before it. For a time the concerts were rather an experiment, and as such rightly met with lenient criticism. Now we need no longer hesitate to let them be judged by their own merits, as the efforts of trained musicians. Last Term, with its scarlatinas and rashes and coughs, was a very trying one for the choir, but none the less they brought it to a brilliant ending with the School Concert, on the evening of December 23rd.

At eight o'clock the Concert was opened by Goss' Christmas Anthem, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings." Mr. Goldschmidt conducted, the Rev. Charles Smith accompanied on the piano, Mr. Edwards on the organ. The simple but stately anthem was given with spirit and precision, particularly when the full choir joined in on the phrase "For unto us is born this day," after the lead of the tenors and basses only. Mr. W. Anstice followed with a beautiful air from Mehul's *Joseph*, quieter than his usual class of music, but sung with great taste and smoothness. Then came the great feature of the evening—the string of choruses from Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. The choruses are

the best test of the progress of a choir, as they need both fullness of tone, accurate time, and diversity of expression. No three successive choruses could have been found better fitted to show how thoroughly the choir are masters of all those qualifications for good chorus-singing, than "He sent a thick darkness," "He smote all the first-born," and "But as for his people." The stifling chorus "He sent a thick darkness," came first, and was sung with the utmost care by all voices. Everybody was fully alive to the difficulty of the work, and put forth his best efforts. This was followed by "He smote all the first-born," which was sung with splendid firmness and regard to time. The delightful pastoral chorus "But as for his people," was sung immediately after with equal skill, and formed a charming contrast to its forerunner. With that chorus ended the selection from *Israel in Egypt*, which from beginning to end was sung with intelligence, accuracy, and spirit, such as to place it far above anything ever before given at our School Concerts. The next piece was the exquisite Terzetto "Lift thine eyes," from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, sung with great delicacy by Messrs. W. Anstice, Trevelyan, and C. S. Arkcoll. The more praise is due to Mr. Anstice for his singing, from the fact of his having to undertake it on the very shortest notice, in consequence of Mr. W. Goldschmidt falling ill on the last morning. The sacred part of the Concert was finely closed by Handel's chorus "And the Glory of the Lord," given in a style in no way inferior to the other choruses.

After an interval of 15 minutes, the second part of the Concert was opened by the singing of the new Carmen Feriale "Floreant Rugbeia," both words and music by the Rev. C. E. Moberly. The applause with which it was greeted, both before and after the encore, showed what satisfaction it gave to the school for whom it was written, and Mr. Moberly was forced to rise and acknowledge the loud calls made for him. Messrs. Trevelyan and C. S. Arkcoll then sang a pretty duet of Keller's—"Morning in thy splendour glowing!"—in a very pleasing style, but did not meet with the encore they deserved, only, let us hope, because the audience were too much exhausted with their applause of "Floreant Rugbeia." Gottschalk's "Wake thee, my dear!" was sung by the choir with considerable expression, but perhaps a little too heavily. Mr. S. P. Micholls played Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso on the piano, with great care, considerable brilliancy, and a